

Jubilees

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Word count: 8036

Abstract: The book of Jubilees stands out for its combination of length, antiquity, and coherence. The structure of the book is considered from four perspectives: as a rewriting of Genesis and Exodus, as a chronology, as an apocalyptic revelation, and as a literary unity that shows seams from the process of reconciling a variety of sources already in tension. The themes and emphases discussed are the reaction assimilation to Hellenism, the eternality of the law, eschatology, separation from Gentiles, women, the festival calendar, God's perfect justice, and angelology and demonology. The historical context is Jerusalem in the 150s BCE, perhaps in a school for study of the law. The Dead Sea Scrolls evidence use of Jubilees as scripture. Jubilees went on to be influential for legal, narrative, and chronological details and themes in the interpretation of Genesis. It survived as canonical only in the Ethiopic (Abyssinian) Orthodox Church.

Keywords: Jubilees; Book of Divisions; Divisions of the Times; Little Genesis; Ethiopic Bible

The book of Jubilees provides a wealth of information about Jewish thought in the second century BCE. It stands out for its combination of length, antiquity, and coherence. It is almost twice as long as the Wisdom of ben Sira (the next longest work from that early period) but underwent little or no revision during its long transmission other than moderate scribal error, seen from a comparison of the complete copies in Ethiopic and the fragments from Qumran in the original Hebrew. The book claims authority as revelation in its own right but also presents a clarified reading of the core narrative from Genesis through Exodus 24, frequently drawing from additional sources and traditions. Originally known as the book of Divisions of the Times, Jubilees takes its name in Greek and scholarly convention from its concern to trace chronology from creation to the entry of Israel into the promised land using a system of jubilee periods (49 years), weeks of years (7 years), and years. The fiftieth jubilee period, or jubilee of jubilees, marks a large-scale fulfillment of the release and return described in Leviticus 25, and the completion of the revelation of the eternal laws and judgments to all Israel. The eternal law requires first and foremost the distinction of Israel from other nations. In this way Jubilees reacts against those Jews who sought to assimilate to Greek culture, and against those who anticipated a new law or other significant reforms to mark the beginning of a new era. In Jubilees, the only necessary reform is for Israel to repent and seek out the law revealed to all Israel in the jubilee of jubilees. Written by a sophisticated scholar, presumably a levitical teacher in Jerusalem, Jubilees influenced later sects and divisions in Judaism, but itself is not sectarian. Jubilees was copied and interpreted as scripture in many texts found at Qumran. Its influence can be found across a wide variety of sources, particularly in chronological details and in narrative and legal exegesis of Genesis. However, the work was preserved as scripture in its entirety only in the Ethiopic (Abyssinian) Orthodox Church, from where it returned to scholarly attention in Europe in the nineteenth century.

Structure

Structure as rewritten scripture

The vast bulk of Jubilees can be explained as a rewriting of Genesis through the middle of Exodus. Although problems with the term “rewritten Bible” or “rewritten scripture” are much discussed, the terms are appropriate for the relationship between Jubilees and Genesis-Exodus. A written text of Genesis-Exodus is explicitly and implicitly assumed, it is treated as scripture, and it is rewritten in all the conventional ways, including minor adjustments, extensive additions that provide background or continuity to the original narrative flow, rearrangements, and abbreviation of major sections. In these ways Jubilees is a parade example of “rewritten scripture,” whether it be classified as a genre, practice, or technique. The limitation of the term for describing Jubilees is that the book makes use of much more than Genesis and Exodus. Jubilees depends on several books ultimately included in the Jewish canon, including Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Psalms, and Job, as well as the Book of the Watchers and other portions of 1 Enoch. The relationships between Jubilees and the Aramaic Levi Document, the Genesis Apocryphon, and possibly a lost book of Noah are less clear. Only on a case-by-case basis could one argue that these other sources are treated as scripture and rewritten. Thus Jubilees rewrites Genesis and Exodus, but is more than a rewriting of Genesis and Exodus.

As Jubilees rewrites the biblical narrative, it diverges from the pace by spending less time on Exodus and more on Jacob. The following outline indicates the corresponding chapters in the narrative of Genesis and Exodus without implying that they are the only or even the dominant sources used.

- Jubilees 1, narrative framework || Exodus 24
- Jubilees 2–11, primordial history (creation through origin of the nations) || Genesis 1–11
- Jubilees 11–19, Abraham || Genesis 12–25
- Jubilees 19–38, Jacob || Genesis 25–35

- Jubilees 39–45, Jacob’s sons || Genesis 37–50
- Jubilees 46–49, Israel in Egypt and exodus || Exodus 1–15
- Jubilees 50, chronological conclusion: sabbaths || Exodus 16:23–30

In order to maintain a sequential chronology, the stories of Abraham and Jacob overlap more in Jubilees than they do in Genesis. Abraham’s story continues into Jubilees 23, but Jacob can rightly be viewed as the center of attention starting in Jubilees 19, and indeed Jacob first appears in the first week of creation.

The rewriting of Genesis follows several common tendencies of early interpreters with additional emphasis on deriving clear and specific laws from the narratives in Genesis. One tendency is to resolve any logical inconsistencies in the story to achieve a coherent whole, such as reconciling Genesis 1 and 2 on when woman was created. Another tendency is to provide background and continuity between stories, such as providing childhood narratives for Abram and explaining why he was chosen to engender a great nation. Another tendency is to resolve any moral ambiguity about ancestral heroes, such as Jacob’s deception of Isaac or the slaughter of the Shechemites. In addition to these common tendencies, Jubilees stands out as an early example of legal exegesis of Genesis. Laws that do exist in Genesis and the early Exodus narratives, such as circumcision, the festival of Passover, and sabbath laws, are developed with greater specificity. Other laws not spelled out in these early biblical narratives are deduced from narrative details, such as a prohibition of nakedness based on God’s gift of garments for Adam and Eve. Consistent with the theme of God’s justice, the author emphasizes that sinners are fairly warned, highlights the judgment of sinners (such as the execution of Cain for committing murder), and explains that apparent exceptions are not actually exceptions (such as the non-application of the death penalty in the case of Reuben’s sin with Bilhah). Also related to legal exegesis is the distinctive emphasis that the festival calendar is immutable binding law.

Structure as chronology

The narrative scope of Jubilees from creation to Sinai can be partly explained by the desire to interpret the pre-Sinai narratives as revealed legal material in conformity with the rest of the Torah. Additionally, counting chronology from creation through the life of Moses leads to the point that the release from slavery in Egypt and return to the land of Israel (falsely called the land of Canaan, according to Jubilees) fulfills Leviticus 25, the law of the jubilee release and return in the fiftieth year. Leviticus 25 calls for counting seven weeks of years (49 years) and declaring a jubilee release and return in the fiftieth year. The book of Jubilees shifts the scale from a year to a jubilee period (49 years). Thus, the book of Jubilees counts 49 jubilee periods from creation to the slavery in Egypt (2401 years), and in the fiftieth jubilee period (the years 2402–2450 counting from creation) the entire nation of Israel is liberated from slavery, abstains from agriculture, and returns to their ancestral property, as Leviticus 25 requires in the fiftieth year. The conclusion of Jubilees also hints at a jubilee year to follow the jubilee of jubilee periods, conditional on Israel's maintaining purity and avoiding sin. The distinctive characteristic of dating events from the creation of the world in jubilee periods (49 years), weeks of years (7 years), and years gives the book its conventional English title, even though "Divisions of the Times" appears to be the oldest title. The chronological specificity of Jubilees is one of its most enduring influences, such as among the Syriac chronographers. However, other than the explicit point that the release from Egypt and return to Israel/Canaan fulfills Leviticus 25 on a large scale, it is easy to overestimate the extent to which heptadic chronology functions in the theology of Jubilees. For example, the eschatological restoration in Jubilees 23 is linked to human repentance, not to a fixed date for divine judgment.

Structure as apocalyptic revelation

Genesis gives no indication of being revealed, let alone specific information on how, when, and to whom it was revealed. Jubilees avoids this problem with an opening chapter that

makes clear that the rest of the book was dictated from the heavenly tablets by an angel of the presence to Moses on Mount Sinai on the day after the Sinai theophany (sixteenth day of the third month of the year of creation 2410). Jubilees provides this revelatory framework for the book as a whole on the model of the apocalypses, a genre already well attested by the time of composition. The revelatory framework is most apparent in chapter 1, which describes the occasion of the revelation of the book, the middle of the book, in which the revealing angel describes the distant future relative to Moses, and the end of the book, which narrates the completion of the dictation and dissemination of its contents. The revelatory framework also surfaces frequently throughout the work as the revealing angel shifts from third-person narrative to address Moses directly. After the first chapter, first-person pronouns refer to the angel(s) of the presence and second-person pronouns refer to Moses.

In addition to using the narrative framework of the apocalyptic genre, Jubilees uses other features of that genre. The revelation includes angelic and demonic agents, heavenly tablets, days of judgment, a structured history, and a future restoration, all of which evoke familiarity with other apocalypses. However, what Jubilees says about these things is not typical of the apocalypses. Angels do not control the visible world and do not interfere in the direct relationship between God and Israel. They do not even appear in the eschatological scenario. Demons exist but serve the purpose of executing justice against sinners, not afflicting the righteous. Days of judgment fit God's immediate and perfect justice, not deferred justice following a period of injustice. The festival calendar is fixed in heaven, but times of human sin, punishment, and restoration are not predetermined. Finally, the hope expressed for the future is the proper observance of the law revealed to all Israel on Sinai, not a new law or division of humanity. Jubilees uses the literary genre of the apocalypses, rewrites portions of the Book of the Watchers, and expresses familiarity with other Enochic books. Nevertheless, the ideas in Jubilees

should be distinguished from the ideas in other apocalypses, even when some features connect them. Similarly the intellectual circle and social location of the author cannot be extrapolated from other apocalypses (see Sidebar).

Sidebar: The Literary Genre of the Apocalypses, Apocalyptic Ideas, and Apocalypticism

The 1970s were a time of particular interest in defining and clarifying the terms “apocalypse,” “apocalyptic,” and “apocalypticism” after they had come to be used loosely or in conflicting ways in studies of early Jewish literature, the historical Jesus and the New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Christian theology. The following distinctions and definitions are now widely accepted.

“Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world” (Collins 1979, 9).

“Apocalyptic” is an adjective that can be used to modify a noun to indicate characteristic resemblance to apocalypses. For example, apocalyptic eschatology is the eschatology typical of the apocalypses (texts in the literary genre apocalypse).

“Apocalypticism” refers to social movements associated with the composition of apocalypses or identifying strongly with particular texts or typical ideas of the apocalypses.

Jubilees uses the literary genre and thus can be called an apocalypse. However, the theological claims are contrary to those typical of the apocalypses. For example, Jubilees rejects the typical apocalyptic eschatology even as it reveals a transcendent temporal reality of the pattern and meaning of history (see below, Eschatology). The distinction between the literary genre and the typical ideas is also useful in describing the presence of typically apocalyptic ideas in Paul and the sectarian literature from Qumran, even though the literary genre is used in neither

case. Similarly, the possibility that a social movement or defined system of beliefs underlies and connects some of the apocalypses can be distinguished from the identification of the literary genre. The literary expression of a movement or phenomenon of apocalypticism may not be limited to one genre, just as the genre was not limited to one social group. Jubilees uses the literary genre but does not represent the same religio-social movement as other apocalypses, just as the question of whether “apocalypticism” describes the intellectual circle of Paul or sectarian compositions found at Qumran cannot be reduced to whether they used the literary genre.

Structure as literary pastiche and as literary unity

In addition to the revelatory framework of the genre “apocalypse” and the literary styles adopted directly from Genesis and Exodus, Jubilees is a complex work of mixed genres. In particular, testaments, blessings, and prayers are persistently developed in Jubilees. Jubilees also includes poetry, flowing narrative, and rigid legal formulae. In addition to collecting various literary styles, Jubilees also reconciles laws and narratives across many sources, all while developing a set of thematic emphases of its own. Furthermore, most of the text is preserved only in a translation of a translation seventeen centuries after composition, so the reliability of the text is less than certain. With the complexities of literary style, ideological ambition, and textual transmission, it is understandable that some scholars have suspected that the work is not a literary unity but a compilation of pieces from various authors. The assumption is that tensions and contradictions are less likely to have existed in the mind of a single author than to have been preserved by an editor combining the compositions of others. While this logic is sometimes persuasive, contradictions apparent to the modern scholar may not have been irreconcilable tensions in the mind of an ancient author. Modern ideals of authorship such as consistency and originality may not equally apply to ancient authors. Furthermore, among ancient writers who created narratives by using received traditions, the distinction between author and editor may not

be as clear as moderns suppose. It may be impossible to distinguish with certainty between a single author and two very like-minded authors, or between an author who makes creative use of sources and an editor who makes slightly less creative use of sources.

Several specific proposals for multiple layers of composition have been offered. The facts that no two proposals substantially agree and that no one proposal has gained traction over time cautions against quickly embracing any one of them. Furthermore, several major themes appear consistently and unify the work. However, even though a single author drawing from many received traditions remains the simplest explanation of the evidence, there is much to learn from the tensions observed in the work. For one, the person responsible for producing the text as we know it was highly attentive to consistency in themes such as divine justice, and less attentive to mathematical and chronological calculations, such as the implications of counting time from the first day of creation or beginning with the creation of the sun on the fourth day. Finally, variations in literary style, if they do not indicate different authors, do indicate various rhetorical techniques. Literary features of heavenly tablets, fixed legal formulae, and emphasis on eternality of law correlate with each other and likely indicate points that were disputed at the time of the author. Similarly, the correlation of legal and chronological rhetoric shows that in Jubilees the festival calendar is divine law, not just a custom. Patterns and variations in rhetorical style are important not as indicative of multiple authors but for understanding the priorities of the author. The relative unity of the work should be appreciated all the more in light of the author's ambition to draw together many literary styles and sources that were already in narrative and theological tension.

Themes and emphases

Reaction to assimilation to Hellenism

A central concern of the book of Jubilees is the rejection of assimilation. The view confronted by Jubilees is best summarized in 1 Maccabees, which shares Jubilees' negative evaluation.

In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us." This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king [Antiochus Epiphanes], who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil. (1 Macc 1:11–15 NRSV)

The epithet "renegades," literally "lawless sons," refers to those who subordinated Jewish law to Hellenistic custom, the opposite of Jubilees' ideal of "seeking" the law. Jubilees also suggests that a covenant with Gentiles is inconsistent with a covenant with God and therefore avoids the detail in Genesis that Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech (Gen 26:28–31; even an oath of peace is presented as a mistake in Jub. 24:25–27). It is not clear what time period the assimilationists had in mind in referring to "since we separated from" the Gentiles. It could have been a recent event, or the divorces described in Ezra and Nehemiah, or the primordial division of the nations after Noah. The last option would fit with the conclusion of the Animal Apocalypse that all nations (species) will return to being one nation (species), or the agenda attributed to Antiochus Epiphanes that "all should be one people" (1 Macc 1:41). In any case, Jubilees counters any such claim by asserting that the separation of Israel from the Gentiles was commanded by God in the first week of creation, well before Noah, Abraham, or Jacob were even born. There was no time when Israel was not separated from Gentiles. Similarly, Jubilees attributes "many disasters" to assimilation in general and the worst disasters to intermarriage in particular (30:14–15). Jubilees also addresses the specific issues mentioned in 1 Macc 1:11–15.

The gymnasium “according to Gentile custom” takes its name in Greek from the word “nakedness.” Jubilees addresses this point by deriving a law from the biblical narrative that God gave garments to the first man and woman: “For this reason it has been commanded in the tablets regarding all those who know the judgment of the law that they cover their shame and not uncover themselves as the nations uncover themselves” (3:31, all quotations of Jubilees from VanderKam 1989). Finally, Jubilees places a strong emphasis on circumcision and the proper application of the laws related to it. The insistence that circumcision not be delayed or leave any flesh may be a reaction to those tempted to delay circumcision until persecution against circumcision passed (15:26, 33). The legal exegesis regarding circumcision may also be a response to other Jews who followed the law but interpreted it differently, but the renegades described in 1 Maccabees seem to be in mind when Jubilees says, “All the people of Belial will leave their sons uncircumcised just as they were born” (15:33). The epithet “people of Belial” in VanderKam’s translation of Jubilees matches the epithet of the assimilationists in 1 Macc 1:11, translated by the NRSV as “renegades” (see the Septuagint translation of 2 Chron 13:7 for the convention of translating Hebrew “sons of Belial” into Greek as “lawless sons”). While 1 Maccabees was composed much later and the narrator is not sympathetic to the view of the assimilationists, the fact that the description in 1 Maccabees matches so precisely the position against which Jubilees argues suggests that 1 Maccabees accurately describes the viewpoint of assimilationist Jews at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. However, Jubilees is not merely a reaction to those who radically reject Jewish law, and certainly not an effort to persuade them otherwise. Jubilees seems to assume an audience interested in following Jewish law and presents a detailed and rigorous interpretation of the law.

Eternality of the law

Jubilees focuses on legal exegesis in general and on the eternity of the law in particular. The assimilationists described in 1 Macc 1 assert that there was a (better) time before the laws separating Jews from Gentiles, and that there can be a time following those laws. Others may have argued similarly that the law was temporally conditioned and therefore adaptable in other circumstances, or that persons were righteous before the law of Moses and people can continue to be righteous without the law, or that an eschatological “new Moses” might supersede the old Moses, or that a new Phinehas might earn a new high priesthood (cf. 1 Macc 2:26). Whatever the particular arguments, any and all such arguments are refuted by the emphasis on the eternity of the law. Jubilees emphasizes the eternity of the law in several ways. First, while clearly revering the law of Moses, the author emphasizes that the eternal law that was most completely publicized through Moses did not originate with Moses. The righteous before Moses knew, followed, and taught the same laws. Laws known from Leviticus predated Moses and go all the way back to Enoch and Noah (21:10). Indeed, Jubilees pushes the origin of the law even further, outside the human realm, to the heavenly tablets which serve as the fixed written record of God’s eternal law and judgments. These tablets are the source of all divine revelation starting with ancient heroes and are fully revealed to Israel through Moses. Jubilees persistently emphasizes the eternity of the laws and tablets: “This law is (valid) for all history forever... it is an eternal ordinance ordained and written on the heavenly tablets” (15:25); “for the history of eternity” (23:32); “This law has no temporal limits forever” (32:10); “For it is an eternal statute and it is engraved on the heavenly tablets... There is no temporal limit because it is ordained forever” (49:8). The only qualification is that some of the eternal laws were not enforced before they were revealed at the time of Moses. This qualification meets the theological need of maintaining God’s justice, such that one would not be punished if one had not been warned before the offense, and the narrative need of explaining why Reuben’s sin was not punished as

the eternal law would have required had it been revealed by then (33:15–16). Jubilees explicitly states that the laws are permanent: “For the statute, the punishment, and the law had not been completely revealed to all but (only) in your [Moses’] time as a law of its particular time and as an eternal law for the history of eternity. There is no time when this law will be at an end” (33:16–17).

Eschatology

The eternality of the law is necessary for understanding eschatology in Jubilees. The eternal law was fully revealed and taught in the days of Moses, with the people given forty years after Sinai to learn its commands (50:4). After that, the ball is in Israel’s court. Jubilees 1 acknowledges that Israel will sin and be punished according to the terms of the covenant but insists that God will never abandon Israel. The turning point is not a divine action or determined moment in structured history, but a human move toward studying and following the laws: “In those days the children will begin to study the laws, to seek out the commands, and to return to the right way” (23:26). There is no “new law” or new world order—only a return to the old eternal law. Furthermore, crying to God for intervention is not enough. Once Israel returns to the law, the blessings of the covenant will be restored, including the longevity of the oldest biblical heroes, security in the land, peace, and prosperity (23:27–31). The same theme is expressed in terms of purity in Jub. 50, as history after Moses is summarized: “The jubilees will pass by until Israel is pure of every sexual evil, impurity, contamination, sin, and error. Then they will live confidently in the entire land. They will no longer have any satan or any evil person. The land will be pure from that time until eternity” (50:5). Thus eschatology in Jubilees is merely the end of sin as Israel turns to fulfill its obligations under the eternal law. There is no new heaven, earth, territory, temple, priesthood, or law. There is no angelic conflict, appointed time, or divine

intervention other than the Deuteronomistic principle that God punishes sinners until they repent and blesses them when they do.

Separation from Gentiles

The theme of separation from Gentiles goes well beyond the aforementioned argument against assimilation to Hellenism. The most expanded character in Jubilees is Jacob, who defines the distinction of Israel from the nations. Israel's separation to be uniquely God's people appears already in the first week of creation. The distinction between Israel and the nations is anticipated on the very first day of creation in the ranks of angels, which we later learn are distinguished by circumcision and sabbath observance. The distinction becomes explicit at the end of the first week, when the declaration of the holiness of Israel after twenty-two generations accompanies the declaration of the holiness of the sabbath after twenty-two works of creation (2:18–23). After the flood, Jubilees develops the etiology of the nations into an etiology of wickedness and develops Abraham into an arch-separator. Gentiles learn illicit astronomical teaching, which Abraham recognizes as foolish. Gentiles develop idolatry, which Abraham rejects. Gentiles fall under the dominion of Mastema (the punisher angel partly based on the *satan* in the prologue of Job), demons, and ravens, all of whom Abraham defeats. Abraham's circumcision is also the occasion for a blunt theological explanation of the difference between Israel and Gentiles:

But he chose Israel to be his people. He sanctified them and gathered (them) from all mankind. For there are many nations and many peoples and all belong to him. He made spirits rule over all in order to lead them astray from following him. But over Israel he made no angel or spirit rule because he alone is their ruler. (15:30–32)

Absolute separation from Gentiles becomes thematic for Abraham in particular, who teaches Jacob, “Separate from the nations, and do not eat with them. Do not act as they do, and do not become their companion, for their actions are something that is impure, and all their ways are defiled and something abominable and detestable” (22:16). The issue of intermarriage finds

particular emphasis in the contrast between those patriarchs who follow strict endogamy and those who face the consequences of exogamy. According to Jub. 30:13–15:

It is a disgraceful thing for the Israelites who give or take (in marriage) one of the foreign women because it is too impure and despicable for Israel. Israel will not become clean from this impurity while it has one of the foreign women or if anyone has given one of his daughters to any foreign man. For it is blow upon blow and curse upon curse. Every punishment, blow, and curse will come. If one does this or shuts his eyes to those who do impure things and who defile the Lord's sanctuary and to those who profane his holy name, then the entire nation will be condemned together because of all this impurity and this contamination.

Jubilees has no stronger language for any offense. Finally, as already indicated, the separation of Israel from the nations is fulfilled in the “eschatological” future; there is no reformation whereby Gentiles are integrated into Israel or even subjugated to Israel.

Women

The insistence on endogamy is only one aspect of women's expanded roles in Jubilees compared to Genesis. A young man must find not only an Israelite wife but a competent wife. A good mother is important not only for raising good children but also for compensating for the errors of the father, as when Rebecca compensated for Isaac's temporary failure to recognize Jacob's superiority over Esau. Well beyond the occasional adjustment of the Genesis narrative, extended prayers and blessings are placed on the lips of women, who receive revelation and generally play expanded roles in the narratives. Many ancient interpreters turn the patriarchs into ideal figures, but Jubilees does the same for the matriarchs.

Festival calendar

The festival calendar is another major issue in Jubilees. The biblical sources are notoriously vague on the details of calendar. Over against those who supposed that calendrical details were adaptable to changing circumstances as long as the festivals were celebrated every year, Jubilees insists that no such flexibility exists. The first argument is that calendar is law and is written on the heavenly tablets. The second argument is that the festivals are celebrated by

angels in heaven, so that falling out of sync with heavenly celebration would be worse than not celebrating the festivals at all. Jubilees rewrites the flood chronology in Genesis as indicative of a calendar. The major features of the calendar are:

- Each year consists of 364 days (52 weeks).
- Because 364 is divisible by seven each day of the year falls on the same day of the week every year.
- Festivals never coincide with the sabbath.
- Each month has 30 days (not linked to the moon).
- Each season has three months and an extra day of “memorial festival.”
- Pilgrimage festivals fall on the fifteenth of the first, third, and seventh months.

Jubilees openly polemicizes against a 354-day lunar calendar (6:36) and rewrites the fourth day of creation so that the sun and not the moon is used for calculation of times (2:9). Outright assimilation to the “festivals of the nations” is part, but only part, of the concern here. Even celebrating the correct festival on the wrong day is unacceptable (6:36–37). The Seleucid and later Hasmonean calendars had 354 days. Daniel 7:25 indicates that Antiochus Epiphanes will “seek to change the times,” which may have meant changing the festivals or changing the calendar used for festivals, both of which Jubilees declares legally unacceptable. Jubilees’ 364-day solar calendar is often associated with the Astronomical Book of Enoch. However, the Astronomical Book is not a festival calendar and does not promote a solar calendar but describes it in relationship to a lunar calendar. The Jubilees festival calendar is reflected in several sectarian documents found at Qumran. Insistence that adopting the Hasmonean calendar violated eternal law probably contributed to the marginalization of communities that accepted Jubilees as authoritative.

Divine justice

The concern for law in Jubilees extends to establishing the justice of God and the cosmos. Some of the rhetoric is traditional, such as the description of God as the just judge who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes (5:16; 21:4; 33:18); but Jubilees goes further by reassigning to an angel the unbecoming deeds attributed to God in Genesis and Exodus. Jubilees further asserts that the cosmos is fundamentally just: “there is no injustice” (5:13). Sin does occur but never goes unpunished. Thus, whereas Genesis says nothing of implementing the appropriate punishment for Cain’s fratricide, Jubilees provides it: “His house fell on him, and he died inside his house. He was killed by its stones for with a stone he had killed Abel and, by a just punishment, he was killed with a stone” (4:31). Furthermore, Jubilees asserts that all punishment is just. Thus, everyone who drowned in the flood—including even the cattle—personally deserved punishment for capital offenses (5:2). Whereas the Enochic Book of the Watchers asserts that demons afflict without justice, Jubilees asserts that demons are allowed to exist only as a means of punishing sinners, much as Ben Sira explains scorpions and the natural elements “created for punishment” (1 En. 16:1; Jub. 10:8, Sir. 39:28–34; see also Wisdom of Solomon 11:15–20; 12:8–10). Finally, for Jubilees perfect justice means that sinners are warned before they are fully punished. Thus, Reuben was not punished by death for his sin with Bilhah because he was unaware of the consequences of this sin that were yet to be revealed (33:15–16). More often, the point is that sinners were warned and therefore can be justly punished (see especially 9:14–15; 10:29–34). Most strikingly, the ancestors of all Gentiles swore oaths accepting a covenant that requires capital punishment for the offense of eating blood (6:10–12). Jubilees does not advocate that humans carry out the sentence, but it does imply that one reason Israel should separate from Gentiles is to avoid the destruction to which Gentiles are justly doomed. There is no injustice. Gentiles are and will be punished for their ancestral and persistent sin. Jews

are chastised if they violate the covenant. Suffering will be replaced by covenantal blessings when Israelites sinners collectively seek the law.

Angelology and demonology

Angels and demons play a greater role in Jubilees than in Genesis and Exodus, starting with the narrative framework when God commands an angel of the presence to dictate to Moses from the heavenly tablets. The first detail dictated is that on the first day of creation God created a hierarchy of angels. Eventually we learn that angels of the presence serve in the heavenly temple, mirroring the Levites, and that the angels of Holiness are circumcised and rest on the sabbath, mirroring the Israelites. The angels of nature are not circumcised and, like nature itself, do not rest on the sabbath, mirroring the Gentiles. We also learn that angels have the task of leading Gentiles away from God, but never mediate God's direct rule over Israel (15:31–32, in sharp contrast to apocalypses such as the Book of the Watchers and the Animal Apocalypse). In these ways the divisions of the angels reinforce the theme of separation from Gentiles. The angel of the presence mediates God's transcendence, but emphatically does not interfere or even interpret: "For I know and from now on will inform you—not from my own mind because this is the way the book is written in front of me, and the divisions of times are ordained on the heavenly tablets" (6:35). Angels frequently appear as helpers in various capacities but do not have significant agency or play any part in the "eschatological" sequence.

Demons also appear in the book of Jubilees. The basic narrative—but not the theological function—of the demons is taken from the Book of the Watchers. The children of the Watchers and humans were half-spirit, half-flesh. The flesh half was killed by the sword, but the spirit half remained in the earthly realm afflicting humans. However, whereas the Book of the Watchers asserts that they torment without justice and will continue to do so until the final day of judgment, Jubilees asserts that they were all removed simply by Noah's request (1 En. 16:1; Jub.

10:7). Mastema then requests that ten percent of them be restored for the purpose of punishing human sin. The righteous should be immune from demons, but just in case Noah receives further immunity from demons in the form of medical instructions. However, this information is transmitted in books only to Shem and ultimately only to the Levites (10:14; 45:16). Again, the theme of separation of Jews from Gentiles underlies the role of the demons in Jubilees. Demons afflict Gentiles and Jews who assimilate to them and their sins, but the righteous such as Abraham easily defeat them. Once Jacob appears on the scene, demons do not appear except as objects of Gentile worship.

Mastema plays a special role in the angelology of Jubilees. “Mastema” is actually scholarly shorthand for the fuller designation, “prince of Mastema,” which may well be better translated as a title, “prince of hostility,” that is, the angel in charge of hostility. Mastema and his forces take on several hostile roles, including punishing sinners and various roles attributed to God in Genesis and Exodus that seem unbecoming. For example, in Jubilees it is not God but an angel who tries to kill Moses and who hardens Pharaoh’s heart (48:2–3, 12, 17). Jubilees explains the cruel test of Abraham in the same way that the prologue of Job explains the cruel test of Job. Mastema takes the blame for initiating the test, but the important outcome is that “the prince of Mastema was put to shame” (18:12; cf. 48:12). Successful evil against the Israelites, such as the killing of infant males around the time of Moses’ birth, is not attributed to Mastema. The word “*mastema*,” whether a name or part of a title, evokes comparison with the similar-sounding *satan*, which itself has a history of connotation from angelic skeptic or accuser to cosmic enemy of God. On this spectrum, the “prince of hostility” functions mostly as an angelic accuser in a fundamentally just cosmos.

Historical context

The date of composition of Jubilees is determined primarily by manuscript evidence and coordinating Jubilees with the events described in 1 Maccabees. The oldest copy of Jubilees in the original Hebrew is 4Q216, which Milik dated close to the middle of the second century BCE, and VanderKam dated more cautiously to the last quarter of the century (VanderKam and Milik 1994 2). As we have seen, Jubilees generally reflects the Hellenistic assimilation movement and specific issues from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (reigned 175 to 164 BCE). Jubilees 4:19 seems to know the Enochic Book of Dreams, dated to 164 BCE or slightly earlier. Jubilees 23 gives a historical “prediction” that matches the Maccabean revolt, although it assesses the situation very differently from 1 Maccabees. According to Jubilees, none of the rival claimants to the high priesthood did anything but defile the holy of holies, and the violence among Jews caused the divine punishment of foreign invasion and famine. On less firm footing it may be possible to date the famine to 162 or 160 and to identify the gradual restoration to peace as that following the bloodless departure of Bacchides in 159. The next major event is Jonathan’s claim of the kingship and high priesthood in 152. Elements in Jubilees such as optimism about the high priesthood and Jewish unity would have been difficult for the author of Jubilees to maintain during the Hasmonean Dynasty that began in 152. Thus, Jubilees was likely composed during the intersacerdotium, the period between 159 and 152 for which no high priest is recorded. Some scholars, however, attempt to link certain features in Jubilees to events in the days of John Hyrcanus (134–104 BCE).

Jubilees gives little hint of its author’s identity. It is likely that he was from the tribe of Levi and saw himself as part of the process started when Jacob “gave all his books and the books of his fathers to his son Levi so that he could preserve them and renew them for his sons until today” (45:16). The fact that Jubilees does not distinguish the roles of priest and Levite and never mentions Aaron is probably a function of the revelatory framework (based on Exodus 24)

before the election of Aaron in Exodus 28. The polemics regarding the status of Levites relative to Zadokites and Aaronides, such as those in Ezekiel 40, seem not to be an issue in Jubilees and should not be read into this work. We cannot say whether the author was a priest. Jubilees is a remarkably sophisticated work that reflects a great deal of learning and well-developed ideas. It may follow that the author's social location was comparable to that of Ben Sira, about whom we have more information. In this case the author may have had the primary occupation of educating adolescent males in Jerusalem, in what may loosely be called a "wisdom school" or "Torah academy." The possibility that the primary audience consisted of adolescent males would fit with the emphasis on choosing a good (endogamous) wife, although the prohibition of giving children in exogamous marriage would address an older audience. There may even be a subtle allusion to an "academic year" in 12:27: "He took his fathers' books (they were written in Hebrew) and copied them. From that time he began to study them, while I was telling him everything that he was unable (to understand). He studied them throughout the six rainy months." Further research is needed to establish the social location of the author with any reliability.

Past scholars have been more interested in aligning Jubilees with groups such as pietists (Hasidim), Enochians, Pharisees, Rabbis, Essenes, and Qumran sectarians. It is safe to say the author was "pious," but nothing suggests that he belonged to an organization with defined leadership and membership ("The Pietists"). The author of Jubilees has been associated with "Enochians" because the work reflects awareness of several Enochic writings and uses the Book of the Watchers. However, the deep theological differences between Jubilees and the Enochic writings prohibit too strong an identification, even if a group defined by acceptance of Enochic writings existed at the time. The relationship between Jubilees and the later-defined categories of "Pharisees" and "Rabbis" can be seen two ways. Some scholars, assuming that rabbinic law represents a long-established mainstream of Judaism, have focused on differences between

Jubilees and rabbinic law to conclude that Jubilees represents a sectarian opposition movement. On the other hand, many of the legal and narrative interpretations and interpretive methods well-known from rabbinic literature are first attested in Jubilees. The safest conclusion is that Jubilees predates the categories “Pharisee” and “Rabbis” and cannot be called either pro-Pharisee or anti-Pharisee. In the same way, similarities and differences between Jubilees and what we know of the Essenes can be discerned. Again, Jubilees should be understood as predating the category and influencing but not being influenced by later divisions. From the Qumran scrolls and the Cairo Damascus Document it is clear that Jubilees was influential on some sectarian Jews. However, it is also clear that Jubilees is not itself sectarian. Jubilees orders humanity into the categories Gentile and Israel. Within Israel the only distinct group is the traditional distinction of the tribe of Levi. Throughout the book strong emphasis is placed on “all Israel,” the importance of brotherly harmony, and the condemnation of violence among Jews. Other than counting the Hellenistic assimilationists as forsaking their membership in Israel, particularly by rejecting circumcision, Jubilees never implies that God’s people is anything less than all Israel. One can trace the influence of Jubilees on later sects in Judaism, but attempts to identify the sect of the author obfuscate the basic non-sectarian nature of the text.

Reception and influence

Jubilees itself refers to “seekers of the law,” who likely were the first audience of the book (4Q216 2.13; Jub. 1:12; 23:26). Our earliest external evidence of reception comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Cairo Damascus Document. Here four kinds of use are clearly attested. First, Jubilees was copied frequently, leaving traces of fourteen manuscripts in five caves. Only the most popular among the books that survived in the Jewish canon surpass Jubilees in this regard (Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Genesis, Exodus). Second, Jubilees was itself a source for rewritten scripture, such as in the fragments labeled “Pseudo-Jubilees,” and arguably others.

Third, Jubilees is cited as scripture in 4Q228 and is referred to by its Hebrew title (the Book of Divisions of the Times) in 4Q384 and CD 16. Fourth, the influence of Jubilees can be traced far beyond citations by title. The annual festival of covenant renewal in the middle of the third month appears to have been first argued in Jubilees and is widely accepted in a variety of documents found at Qumran. Beyond Qumran, Hebrew fragments of Jubilees surface much later in the Book of Asaph the Physician and several interpretations of Genesis from the tenth to thirteenth centuries, as late as Algazi's Chronicle (sixteenth century). The chain of transmission of the work in Hebrew remains unexplained.

The work was translated from Hebrew into Greek and leaves traces of broad influence, particularly for details such as chronology and the names of matriarchs. Influence (or at least striking parallels) can be found in the New Testament in ideas such as the reckoning by which one day in heaven equals a thousand years on earth (4:30, 2 Peter 3:8), angelic mediation of the law (Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2), and the prohibition of eating blood as binding on Gentiles (Acts 15:20). More direct influence is evident among early Christians including Justin Martyr. In Greek the work was sometimes known as Jubilees or Little Genesis (or better, Detailed Genesis). The work was also translated (in part or in its entirety) into Syriac and used particularly for chronology. A third of Jubilees is preserved in a fifth-century palimpsest of a Latin translation that apparently once belonged to Arian Christians in northern Italy. Even though this manuscript is almost entirely illegible to the human eye today, the Jubilees Palimpsest Project is working to apply recent advances in imaging technology to recover text from this oldest copy since the fragments among Dead Sea Scrolls.

A Greek translation was in turn translated into Ethiopic, which is preserved by Ethiopian Christians to this day. Under its original title, "Book of Divisions," this work has been treated as canonical and interpreted over the centuries. Numerous copies as old as the fourteenth century

are preserved in Ethiopic. Comparison with older Hebrew and Latin fragments confirm the basic reliability of the Ethiopic manuscripts, which alone provide the complete text. From Ethiopia Jubilees returned to scholarly attention in Europe by way of missionaries toward the middle of the nineteenth century.

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